89

SEVENTEEN SERMONS

Preach'd upon

Several Occasions.

Never before Printed.

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With the SUMM of a CONFERENCE,
On *February* 21, 1686, between Dr. *Clagett* and Father *Gooden*, about the Point of Transubstantiation.

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The Second Sermon.

MATTH. XVIII. 7.

Woe unto the World because of Offences; for it must needs be that Offences come; But woe to that man by whom the Offence cometh.

THE great end of the Gospel is to bring Mankind to Salvation, and in order thereunto to convert them from Sin and from all dangerous Error, and to lead them to a right Faith, and a Holy Life: But it is too evident, that this end is not attained Universally. And if any one should be tempted to suspect that the Christian Religion is not therefore a Divine Revelation, because it has in so great part failed of the end which it pretended to pursue; he may be easily brought to assurance again, by considering the vast good which Christianity hath done in the World, but especially by observing that the Go-

ſpel hath foretold, that all men would not believe and obey. Our Bleſſed Lord himſelf teſtified, that many were called, but few were choſen; and that ſtrait was the Gate and narrow the Way that leadeth to Life, and few there be that find it: Nay, inaſmuch as he hath forewarned us of a Day of Judgment, and hath told us beforehand, That the *word which he hath ſpoken, the ſame ſhould judge us at the laſt day*. This was a manifeſt Declaration, that he did not pretend to lead men to Faith and Repentance by ſuch means as could not but be effectual, but only by ſuch as were ſufficient, if we would in any meaſure comply with his gracious Methods; and it was alſo a plain intimation that a great many would be never the better, but the worſe for theſe means that God had provided for their Salvation; and that ſome for not receiving them, others for not improving them, would fall into greater Condemnation.

But our Saviour did not foretel theſe things only, but the *Cauſes* of them too, and what it was that would obſtruct the Progreſs and Deſign of his Religion. For this is the importance of thoſe words of his which I have now choſen for my Subject: *Woe be to the World becauſe of Offences*;

fences; for it must needs be that Offences come.

By Offences, or Scandals, we are here, and almost every-where in the New Testament, to understand those Temptations to Sin, and Inducements to Error which some men lay in the way of others. They are sometimes otherwise expreſt, *Snares, Stumbling-blocks,* and *Occasions of Falling*; for the thing meant by all these expressions is the same. Now concerning *Offences*, our Saviour affirms two things in the words I have read. First, That *they would come*; nay, that it *must needs* be that they would come; *i. e.* that men would arise who should hinder the prevailing of Christianity as much as in them lay, or pervert the Design of it, to the great danger of other mens Souls, who were not well established in the Truth. Secondly, That the consequence of these Scandals would be very sad and pernicious; that is, that very many would stumble at them, and be turned out of the right way. For this must be implied in those words, *Wo to the World because of Offences*: For, 1. It is no ordinary Misery or Calamity which is expreſſed in denouncing a *Wo*; and this Wo must likewise refer to those that

are turned aside by the Scandals and Temptations that others lay before them; because if Offences were not taken as well as given, it seems not easie to say why they should produce so much Sin and Misery as is implied in denouncing *Wo* upon their account. Besides, our Saviour did *afterwards* express the guilt and misery of those that should give Offence by itself, *But wo is to the man by whom the Offence cometh*. That is, to every man that by his own Wickedness hath a Stumbling-block in his Brother's way, and draws him into Sin. So that in the former part of this Verse, that mischief is exprest which would come of Offences, because they would be *taken*. And then, 2. it is also implied that the mischief would not only be in itself great, but likewise of a very large extent; for it is said Wo to the *World* because of Offences; where by the *World* we cannot understand less than a very great part of Mankind, who should be diverted by Offences, either from receiving the Gospel at all, or from entertaining it in the Purity and Power thereof.

There are therefore these two Heads which I am to speak to:

1. That Offences would certainly be given;

Given; *It muſt needs be that Offences come.*

II. That they ſhould do very great miſchief in the World: *Woe to the World becauſe of Offences.*

Which two Points being illuſtrated, I intend to apply them in order to further Inſtruction.

That Offences would certainly be given, *It muſt needs be that Offences come.* By which words I do not underſtand, that it was abſolutely impoſſible but Offences muſt come; for God has not neceſſitated any man to Sin; but the meaning is this, that it was in it ſelf probable, and that in the higheſt degree, that Offences would come; and moreover, God certainly foreſaw that they would ariſe, if he did not interpoſe his Almighty Power to hinder them, which he determined not to do. And this is a ſufficient ground of the certainty of the Prediction, *It muſt needs be that Offences come.* Now the true notion of *Offence* being this, that it is an occaſion given whereby men are either diſcouraged from the Profeſſion of the Truth, or encouraged Practices contrary to it. I ſhall lay before you ſome inſtances under this general Head. And 2. ſhew why it

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was not to be expected but that Offences would be given.

The principal instances are such as these:

1. Opposing the Gospel with outward Violence, and making it the interest of men to renounce the Truth, as they love their Fortunes and their Lives. Of which our Saviour spake in the famous Parable of the Sower, where he explained him *that received the seed into stony places*, to be one that *heareth the word, and with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself*; and not being furnished with deep resolution, *he dureth but for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*, Matth. 13. 20, 21. This was that Offence which our Saviour warned his Disciples of more than of any other. He told them plainly beforehand, That they should be *delivered up to Councils, and brought before Governours, and be hated of all men for his name's sake.* But says he, *He that endureth to the end shall be saved*; and *he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me*, Matt. 10. And this is in itself a great an Offence, or Stumbling-block, to put Men out of the right way, that sometimes

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the general word is used to signifie this particular instance only: Thus when our Saviour said, *Blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me*, Matt. 11. 6. The meaning is, Blessed is he whom the Example of *John* the Baptist's Sufferings does not fright from being my Disciple. And thus when *Peter* said, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*, Matth. 26. 33. He explain'd his own meaning afterward, by saying, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*, v. 35. But then,

2. Doctrines that give liberty to Lust, and that give ease to guilty Minds without reformation, are a very dangerous Offence; for they are framed at once to draw Men off from the Truth, and reconcile them to wicked Practice; and therefore they who are under the strongest inclinations to sin, and need the most powerful restraints, are most forward to receive them; *i. e.* they who will be sure to make the worst use of them. He that offers a Key to let Sinners into Heaven without Repentance, and keeping the Commandments of God, is sure to meet with sufficient Numbers that will not be over-forward to examine how he came by it. And this is that which makes all Doctrines

ctrines of this nature Offences, that they are grateful to the corrupt Inclinations of Mankind; not that they carry any appearance of Truth. It had been long enough ere Men could have been perswaded, that particular Confeſſion of Sins to a Man in ſecret, with a bare purpoſe not to do the like again, will at any time ſuffice for the effect of Abſolution; if the belief of it were not as much for the eaſe of the People, as for the advantage of the Prieſt: Or that bodily Exercife, mere external Works, ſhould either be Godlineſs, or ſupply the want of it. Theſe things bear ſo hard againſt what we know of God by Reaſon, and by Scripture, that nothing but carnal Intereſt, and a deſire that they ſhould be true, could make way for them, and provide them Entertainment. And what Wonders that can do, was too evident in the beginning of Chriſtianity, when the *Gnoſtics* ſeduced no ſmall number of Diſciples, by giving liberty to fleſhly Luſts, and diſcharging them from all obligation to confeſs Chriſt, when they were to take up his Croſs.

3. The mixing of Falſhood with Truth, is another great Offence, tending to much Evil; as it meets with perſons diſpoſed either to overmuch Credulity, or

or too much Diſtruſt. By the former, the falſe Doctrin, or unlawful Practice is embraced, becauſe found in the company of Truth; by the latter, Truth it ſelf ſuſpected, and perhaps thrown off, becauſe 'tis diſgraced with the company of Follies and Lyes. Thus the *Phariſees* recommended their abſurd Traditions to the People, becauſe in the ſame breath they taught them the Law of *Moſes*. Thus ſome of the *Gentiles* were ready to reject Chriſtianity, when they were made to believe it neceſſary for them alſo to obſerve the *Moſaical* Law if they would be Chriſtians. And this is one of the common Scandals of the World, that Truth is ſo often inſincerely repreſented, and falſe Doctrines propounded ſtill by the ſame Authority that holds forth ſome neceſſary Truths. And for this reaſon the Goſpel does not allow, but command us to uſe a Judgment of Diſcretion; not to reject that which is good, becauſe it comes from the ſame Authority that requires evil; nor to admit error, becauſe it is accompanied with truth, but to *prove all things, and to hold faſt that which is good.*

4. All Popular Artifices that are uſed to recommend either wicked Errors, or

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Practices, are also great Offences, and lead many silly Souls astray; of which kind the most obvious are these: An external shew of Strictness and Piety, without real Virtue and Godliness at the bottom of it. And of this the Pharisees were the first notable instance, who placing Religion in abundance of nice Observations, seemed to be the most strict and devout People in the World, and therefore our Saviour knowing the wickedness of their Hearts and Lives, compared them to *whited Sepulchres, that within were full of dead mens bones, and all uncleanness.* And this Offence would be so powerful whenever it should happen, that it seemed good to the Spirit to foretel it expressly, viz. That in the latter times some should depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, forbidding to Marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats, 1 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2, 3. Another Offence of this kind, which was also expressly foretold, is, pretending the Testimony of Miracles. For says our Saviour himself, *There shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.* Behold, says he, *I have told*

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you before, Matth. 24. 24, 25. And this *St. Paul* foretold, that when that *wicked one should be revealed*, his *coming* should be *after the working of Satan with power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*. I shall name but one other popular device for the supporting of Error, and that is to denounce Damnation peremptorily against all Gainsayers; with which Artifice the Judaizers secured themselves against the Gentile Christians, saying, *Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved*. Now although every man that has a tongue, may, if he please, lay this weight upon his Cause, as to exclude all from Salvation that are not of his way; and therefore the threatning be not worthy of a wise man's thought, till the merits of the Cause be examined: Yet it has two notable advantages, that it is framed to work upon the passions of men, more than upon their judgment, and in most men their passion is stronger than their reason; and it may be so used, as to beat the World in hand, that 'tis not Uncharitableness, but meer Pity and Tenderness to the Souls of Men, that compels them to speak so harsh, but so necessary

sary a Truth. And 'tis a wonderful thing to observe how easie Men are to be managed, when on the one side there is a positive Sentence of Damnation to work upon their fears; and on the other, an appearance of serious Charity to win their Affections: for by this Art, Men of contrary Parties, have with strange success served contrary Opinions and Practices. I cannot, if I were willing, reckon all the Offences of this kind, that is popular and plausible ways of deceiving. But that there would be such, our Saviour did not only foretel in the general, when he said, *It must needs be that Offences come*; but in particular also, when he said, *Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheeps-cloathing*, Mat. 7. [illegible]

5. To this I may add what an *Paul* observes, 1 *Tim.* 6. 5. *Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness.* That any thing may be defended as a part of Religion, which makes for worldly Interest. It is no such hard matter to perplex things that are plain, to find colours for denying things that are evident, to hide the weakness or the strength of an Argument, to divert from the Cause to the Person so artificially, as if the

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Cauſe went on ſtill, to loſe the matter in debate, to make Truth look like Errour, and Errour like Truth, to thoſe that are willing to be deceived; if a man is reſolved to bend all his wit this way, for ſomething may be ſaid for any thing.

6. And laſtly, bad examples of men profeſſing the true Religion, are another moſt dangerous Offence: Since I doubt moſt men are ſo framed as to take up their opinions more eaſily from Authority than from other Argument, and they underſtand more eaſily the difference between good and evil Manners, than between ſtrong and weak Reaſons. And then they will be apt to judge of the Truth or Falſhood of a way of Religion by the good or bad Fruits of Practice it brings forth in thoſe that profeſs it: which doubtleſs our Saviour intimated in thoſe words; *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that others ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.* But to hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs, is not only a Scandal to thoſe that are in Errour, confirming them in their wrong way, but likewiſe to thoſe that are in the way of Truth, by encouraging them to Sin in like manner; eſpecially when evil examples are

ſet by thoſe that are particularly obliged to ſet none but good ones, whoſe Place or Office, Wealth or Quality makes them more conſpicuous, and gives others any kind of dependence upon them. And becauſe of the pernicious influence of bad examples, we find St. *Paul* often calling upon the Chriſtians with whom he had to do, to fix their obſervation upon thoſe that were good: *Brethren*, ſays he, *be followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo as ye have us for an enſample: For many walk of whom I have often told you, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt.*

Thus I have very briefly, conſidering the largeneſs of the Subject, ſhewn what Offences were to come, by laying before you the principal and moſt obvious Offences, which we know by the Predictions of the Scripture, and alas for the World! by too ſad experience. And now I proceed to the ſecond Point, which was to conſider, why it muſt needs be that Offences ſhould come; that is, why it was not to be expected, but that theſe, or ſuch Scandals as theſe would be given to the World.

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And this Inquiry is neceſſary to be purſued upon this account, if upon no other, that it may appear, that the certainty of Offences coming, did not ariſe from any defect or fault of the Bleſſed Goſpel of our Saviour. If we conſider the Harmleſs and Dovelike Temper of Chriſtianity, the excellency of its Deſign, the richneſs of its Promiſes, the Divinity of its Rules and Precepts, the Comforts it has in ſtore for all honeſt Minds, and that inſtead of running croſs to the Intereſts of Mankind, either here or hereafter, it ſhews an infallible way to ſingle Perſons, and to Communities to be happy in this World, and to all men to be for ever bleſſed in the World to come; We would rather have expected it ſhould have been foretold, that no man in any Age would ever ſet himſelf to *oppoſe* the deſign of the Goſpel, either in whole or in part. If likewiſe we obſerve what clear and undeniable Teſtimonies of Divine Revelation God approved and owned it by, how highly reaſonable the Principles thereof are, and how thoſe things which could not be known but by Revelation, yet being once revealed, do ſatisfie our Reaſon, and approve themſelves to it; How evident the Deſign thereof is,

how plain the Precepts, how few the poſitive Inſtitutions of it are, and how ſignificant and profitable they are, and how full of Inſtruction, finally, how manifeſt thoſe neceſſary Doctrines are, the belief whereof is neceſſary to make a man a Chriſtian; and what that *Myſtery of Godlineſs* is, which in the Apoſtles days was confeſſed, and *without Controverſie*: If we look upon theſe things, and no farther, we ſhould rather have expected that the Doctrine of our Saviour ſhould never have been gainſaid; never perverted, never mingled with Errour, never have given occaſion to wrangling and diſcord, and never have become the matter of nice and angry Diſpute, but onely of an unblamable Faith and Practice. The Goſpel of Chriſt is undoubtedly a *faithful Saying*, or Doctrine clearly revealed, and ſtanding upon evident Teſtimonies of Divine Revelation; it is alſo *worthy of all acceptation*: Why then *muſt it needs be that Offences come?* To which I ſhall give a plain anſwer in our Saviour's words to *Nicodemus*: *That light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather then light, becauſe their deeds are evil*, Joh. 3. 18. and therefore *it muſt needs be that Offences* ſhould

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come. For the Religion of Chriſt is not ſutable to the Spirit of this World, and therefore the World hateth it; and therefore no wonder if it hath one way or other always ſought to obſtruct the Progreſs and Deſign of it: In a word, it is not the defect, but the exceeding excellence and purity of true Chriſtianity, that has given occaſion to the World to oppoſe it, to pervert it, and to diſcourage the Profeſſion or Practice of it. For it is a Religion too wiſe and too good for them that have no mind to be wiſe and good themſelves; and therefore conſidering the great corruption of humane Nature, which God would not over-bear by an irreſiſtible power, but cure by rational means and methods; no wonder that Offences have come, nay, that our Saviour ſaid *it muſt needs be that Offences come.* To argue more particularly:

1. The Doctrine of the Goſpel is a Doctrine of Manners, lays a ſevere reſtraint upon all the unreaſonable Luſts of Men, and makes a great many Liberties unlawful, which they are for the moſt part violently inclined to take: And therefore every carnal man while he ſo continues, carries within himſelf a ter-

rible prejudice, a secret Enemy against the Truth as it is in Jesus; and his Heart riseth with as much anger against that Doctrine of God, that telleth him it is not lawful for him to pursue his worldly and fleshly desires as he would, but to subdue and mortifie them; as *Herod*, when he took his Brother's Wife, expressed against *John* the *Baptist*, for saying, *It is not lawful for thee to have her.* Man's Nature affecteth a lawless Liberty, and cannot endure to be confined; it is diseased, and cannot endure to be healed; and it was therefore likely enough that very many would reject the Physician, and be angry with those very Remedies that our Heavenly Father has sent. The true and sincere Doctrine of Christ, my Brethren, if it be believed, cannot but make us very uneasie and unquiet while we are conscious of it, and are not willing to be reformed, because it reveals to us the Wrath of God against all our unrighteousness and ungodliness; it forewarns us of a dreadful Sentence at the last day, and of an everlasting Punishment, which we are unwilling at the same time to venture, in which we are unwilling to part with our sins, and to reconcile our selves to God by Repentance. And Men that

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are lovers of Pleaſures, and lovers of Gain, cannot eaſily admit a Doctrine which gives them as much uneaſineſs and diſturbance as if the point of a Sword were always turned toward their very Hearts. For this Reaſon the *Phariſees* could not endure the Doctrine of Jeſus; and this was one Reaſon why the Heathens oppoſed it, and perſecuted it, and is one Reaſon why Chriſtians have corrupted it; by finding out other ways to avoid Damnation, than by a lively Faith, and true Repentance, and effectual Reformation, and keeping the Commandments of God. It is this that hath made way for ſatisfactory Commutations, Merits of others, and the abſolute power of the Keys; and all thoſe devices which are good for nothing but to reconcile a wicked Life to the hopes of Heaven, and to entangle the plain ſenſe of thoſe words of Chriſt; *He that heareth theſe ſayings, and doth them not, I will liken him to a fooliſh man that built his Houſe upon the Sand, and the winds blew, and the rain fell, and the floods came and beat upon that Houſe, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof*; that is, it ſuffered an irreparable Ruin.

2. If we conſider the Doctrine of Chriſt, as it is a Doctrine both of Faith and Manners, it is no way framed to ſerve the ends of ambitious and worldly-minded men, or to help them in purſuing thoſe ends by a pretence of Religion; and therefore it was not to be expected but in proceſs of time it would be by ſome or others molded for that purpoſe, when Opportunity ſhould ſerve. Our Saviour taught the World no other Principles of Morality, no other Articles of Faith, than what were equally for the Intereſt of all parts of Mankind to believe and follow; a common good, and an equal benefit was intended in them all. For let them prevail without corruption and alteration, the Honour and Safety of Soveraign Princes is ſecured, and a quiet and peaceable Life to Subjects; Neighbour-Nations ſhall give ſtrength and confidence, inſtead of creating Jealouſies to one another; the Maſter ſhall be better ſerved, and the Servant better uſed; the Church by her Doctrine and Spiritual Authority will be a Guard to the State, and receive at the ſame time Protection from it. Here was no deſign in Chriſtianity to ſet up any Nation or party of Men, in oppoſition and to the diſadvantage

tage of all mankind beſide; but it plainly aimed at a general good, and under its Penalties requires all its Profeſſors to aim at the ſame too; and condemns thoſe who are lovers of themſelves in oppoſition to all others, amongſt the greateſt Offenders. And this Religion, as *Machiavel* well obſerved, was not calculated for the inſpiring of Men with great Deſigns, ſuch I ſuppoſe as his *Cæſar Borgia* aimed at. It was too plain, too Philoſophical, too Innocent and Charitable, to raiſe an ambitious heat, or to ſerve it. And therefore it was very likely in proceſs of time, that it ſhould be helped out by other Principles and Doctrines that would bring in the *ſwelling of worldly Pride* into the Church, as the *African* Fathers, in their Epiſtle to *Celeſtine*, called it, and advance one part of it to the depreſſing of all the reſt. But becauſe true Chriſtianity ſerves no ſuch Deſign, therefore was our Saviour oppoſed by the Rulers of the Jews; his Doctrine did not tend at all that way, *viz.* to make *Hieruſalem* the Miſtreſs of the World, and that all ſhould depend upon her; it did not miniſter to their ambitious and worldly Hopes, and therefore was not for their turn.

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ment: God's Punishments are not less certain, because they are more slow, than ours. They are not the less certain, because they are not inflicted in Passion, but the more certain. He that Punishes, when Wisdom and Goodness requires severity, Punishes more certainly, than he that Punishes but only as he is led by Sudden and Passionate Anger. If therefore thou art Conscious to thy self of deeds highly Worthy of Punishment, think of God's Patience, and let the Thought of his Patience work a more reasonable effect in thee, than what is the common effect of it; let not his Patience make thee secure, but let it make thee Fear, and go away, and Humble thy self before him, if perchance thy Repentance may keep off that Punishment for the Future, which his Patience hath kept off hitherto. For,

3. That which we have been speaking of being considered, there is very great reason for us to humble our selves before God for our sins, that have been long since committed; and that the more, if God hath not yet thought fit to chastise us for them; for there is the more cause to apprehend that he will do so. I have already observed that *God's thoughts are*

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not as our thoughts are; and there is this notable inſtance of it, wherein we are nearly concerned: When we commit any wickedneſs, the thought of it is Troubleſome and Grievous to us for the preſent, unleſs we have caſt off all ſenſe of God, and care of our own Souls; but by degrees it wears off; and that which a few days ſince lay heavy upon our minds, is now grown ſo light that we do not feel it; and ſo the next Sin that wounds our Conſcience is felt, perhaps, as the former was, and forgotten at laſt, as it was too; and thus we are naturally diſpoſed, not to have the ſame ſenſe of Sins long ago committed, as of guilt we have lately contracted: But this is an infirmity that is to be corrected by Reaſon, and a right Knowledg of God: For it is not ſo with God; the Evil which thou didſt Twenty Years ago, is as freſh in his Remembrance, and lies before him as much to thy diſadvantage, as that which was done but Yeſterday. God's diſpleaſure doth not wear off, as our Trouble doth, though becauſe we are not affected with the Vile Actions that were done a great while ſince, we are apt to flatter our ſelves, that neither is he ſo angry with us, as he was: We behave our ſelves too

often, as if we were accountable for none but the laſt Sins we committed; we do evil things, and cry God Mercy; and then we do them again, and go on in this way, as if nothing were upon the ſcore againſt us, but what troubles us for the preſent. But we ſhould argue quite contrary. God hath all our Wicked Actions in order before him, and therefore we ſhould ſet them before our own Eyes, and remember, that if we have had our profits without Loſſes; and our Pleaſures without Pains, our Sins without Puniſhments, there is the more behind; and that we are as much in danger of the Sins of our Youth, and all the ills we have done ſince, as of the lateſt of all; for which reaſon we ſhould ſay, *Spare us good Lord*; and from the bottom of our Hearts ſhould confeſs and be ſorry for our former offences, and fear and tremble to add new ones to them: And that is the concluſion we are to make of the whole matter; to wit,

4. To uſe the Patience and Long-ſuffering of God for the Preventing of his Anger from Flaming out againſt us, either in this World, or in the World to come; and that by *bringing forth fruits*

meet for repentance, and doing remarkably well in all thoſe kinds, wherein we have formerly done Evil; remembring thoſe words of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 2. 4. *Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the Goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance.* Where the Apoſtle ſeems to intimate, that this is a matter which men are ignorant of, or at leaſt, that they mind it not, *viz.* that *the goodneſs of God leadeth them to repentance*, (*i. e.*) the goodneſs of his Forbearance and Long-ſuffering. We are all of us ſenſible, that his threatnings do naturally lead men to thoughts of amendment; but we are not ſo well aware, that his forbearance was deſigned for the ſame end; though when we come to conſider, it is what we ſhall not be able to deny: For as the reaſon why God threatens, is becauſe he would have the Puniſhment avoided, ſince he that threatens before-hand, doth it, that there may be no occaſion of Puniſhment; ſo the reaſon why the threatning is not inflicted preſently, is the very ſame, eſpecially when it is declared expreſly, that Repentance will be admitted; I ſay the reaſon of the forbearance is the ve-

ry ſame, *viz.* That we might have time to Repent, and means to eſcape: Which uſe of God's forbearance, as it is neceſſary for our Salvation in the World to come, ſo it is the beſt means of our eſcaping in this; although that be a concern for which we ought not in any meaſure to be ſo Solicitous, as for the other. When bad men grow worſe and worſe, it is a ſign that God will viſit the World, and no longer bear the Indignities that are done to his Holy Name: and therefore the ſecurity of good men muſt lie in the growing better and better. When God's Patience and Forbearance is extended to all alike, and ſome are incurable, and grow hardned by it, and others frame themſelves to Piety, and Charity, and Dependance upon God more than ever they did before, it is highly probable, that when he finds ſo great a difference, he will make as great a difference; and for a general inſtruction, make it plain on both ſides, that he will neither fail to Puniſh the Wicked, nor to Protect the Righteous.

Brethren, let us remember our Profeſſion, which is to believe in God, and conſequently to believe, that we are not made ſafe by Wealth, or by Favour, by

by Worldly Power, or by Worldly Policy; but that God is more to us, than all theſe things; and that we depend intirely upon him; that by forſaking him, we forſake our ſtrength and defence; that by adhering to him, we have that Power for our Security, and that Goodneſs for our Security, which made the World, and which Governs the World. Let us then *in this our day conſider the things that belong to our peace*, and *ſeek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near*, that he may be near unto us in all our Troubles and Adverſities, whenſoever they oppreſs us, and be found of us at the hour of Death, and the day of Judgment; that God of Mercy and Love, which in himſelf he always is, and which he deſires to ſhow himſelf to be to us all. *Let* therefore *the unrighteous man forſake his ways, and the wicked man his thoughts; and turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly Pardon.* To the God of Infinite Goodneſs let us aſcribe all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.

UMI

The Twelfth Sermon.

Luke XIII. 5.

I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

CONCERNING *the* Galileans, *whoſe Blood* Pilate *mingled with their Sacrifices*, and *the Eighteen* Jews *upon whom the Tower in* Siloam *fell and ſlew them*, our Saviour's diſcourſe to thoſe that were preſent was this. *Suppoſe ye, that theſe* Galileans, *and theſe Jews were Sinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things; and above all men that dwelt at Jeruſalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

From which words taken in Connexion with what went before, there are two

kinds of Obſervations that may be laid down: The former are rather ſuppoſed than expreſſed; and they are theſe Two,

1. That God is Juſt in the Puniſhments that he inflicts upon Sinners.

2. That by what means ſoever, evil happens to men, the Providence of God is concerned in it.

The Second Kind are intended more directly, *viz.*

1. That they who ſuffer very great Evils, are not always greater Sinners than thoſe who in the mean time ſuffer nothing.

2. That one Reaſon why ſuch evils do not befal all Perſons at the ſame time, who are equally Sinners, is, That while ſome are viſited with the Rod, others may take warning by it. And

3. That if they do not take warning, they ſhall not eſcape.

Theſe are all profitable Inſtructions, and ſuch as this Place naturally yields; which I ſhall therefore purſue, without taking much pains to ſhew how they are contained in it.

Something I ſhall ſay, but very briefly, of the Two Firſt, becauſe they are ſup-

ſuppoſed in theſe Sayings of our Lord, though not the main Things intended:

The Firſt is, That Puniſhment is due to Sin; which is the Ground of all that our Saviour diſcourſes here, concerning the ends of thoſe unhappy men; he knew that his Hearers would be apt to paſs an hard Cenſure upon them, and he took care to prevent it; but they would never have been in danger of running into that extreme, if it had not been fixed in all of them, That Puniſhment was due to Sin; and this our Saviour was far from correcting, but rather confirmed them in it, by concluding, That they alſo ſhould *periſh, except they repented.* The truth is, this is one of thoſe things, that men know by Nature; and it is well that they do; for if notwithſtanding this ſenſe, the World is ſo bad, how much worſe would it have been, if theſe apprehenſions could have been extinguiſhed? Hence it is, that the Conſcience of well-doing inſpires a man with aſſurance; and that Guilt makes him a Coward; That the diſaſters of others expoſe them to be hardly thought of; and that our own Afflictions bring our own Sins to remembrance. The Natives of *Meli-*

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ta, though they were *Barbarians*, yet when they *ſaw a Viper faſten upon St. Paul's hand*, preſently concluded, That he *was a murderer, whom though he had eſcaped the Sea, yet vengeance would not ſuffer to live*, Acts 28. There the natural Senſe of Puniſhment being due to Sin, wrought, though they carried it too far: But with ſomething better reaſon did *Joſeph's* Brethren, when he had brought them into diſtreſs, argue with one another, *Verily, we are guilty concerning our Brother, therefore this diſtreſs is come upon us*, Gen. 42. 21. It is this natural belief, that ſupported many Myſteries of Religion every where, in all Ages of the world, whether thoſe Myſteries were of God's appointing, or of Man's inventing. A good part of the Sacrifices and Rites of the Heathens, and the *Jews*, in their Worſhip, was to make expiation of Sin; and the Beaſt was killed, to confeſs that Puniſhment was due to that man for whom it was offered: It is this Senſe that diſpoſes men to believe ſtrange Deluſions; that there is virtue in little things, which ſeem to be no better than Charms to take away the guilt of Sin, and to prevent the Puniſhment of it: When people *wear Habits*, and *go Pilgrimages*,

mages, and *touch Relicks*, and apply *Holy Water*, and twenty other ſuch Remedies to themſelves, for the eaſe of their minds, tho they take a ſilly way to their end, yet the Principle is good at the bottom, That Sin and Puniſhment are linked together, and that one naturally draws on the other, if ſome method be not uſed to break the chain; which belief is ſo troubleſome to a guilty mind, that for this reaſon, the generality of men are naturally diſpoſed to like a Religion ſo much the more, for having great variety of Reliefs for an uneaſie Conſcience; which is the true reaſon why mankind, if good care be not taken, are ready to run into a thouſand Superſtitions: To prevent which, and to bring us into the way of Salvation, God ſent his own Son into the World to be a Sacrifice for us, that we having ſo great an aſſurance of the expiation of our ſins, ſhould chearfully ſet our ſelves to the Reformation of our Hearts and Lives, and *ſerve God without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of our life.* This is the firſt Obſervation, That the Principle upon which all this Diſcourſe proceeds, is a natural Truth, *viz.* That Puniſhment is due to Sin.

2. That

2. That by what means ſoever evils befal men, it ſtill comes by the Providence of God, either directly ſending it, or at leaſt knowingly permitting it, and for wiſe and good Reaſons determining to permit it: This alſo is evidently preſumed in this Diſcourſe; for upon the relation of thoſe diſaſters, the minds of the Hearers preſently turned to this Concluſion, That they were very great Sinners that ſuffered ſuch things, and conſequently, that the evil was ſent by a Juſt and Wiſe Providence: Now this our Saviour did not go about to correct neither, but rather confirmed them in it, that God's hand was in all that happened, as themſelves ſhould find it too, if they repented not: So that whether evil comes by the free will of others, as it did upon *the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices*, or by ſuch means as ſeem to be merely caſual, as it did upon *the eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell*; in both caſes, the Providence of God doth interpoſe, attending the whole Affair, regulating, and ordering, and with exact knowledg of each circumſtance, permitting that which happens, and the means by which it happens: A very inſtructing Conſideration, which

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we ſhould lay up in our minds, heartily believing it, and frequently entertaining our ſelves with it, that we may be directed by it in our Proſperity, and comforted with it in our Adverſity; for it will give us in our better ſtate, the beſt direction how to ſecure it; and to all other methods and ways which we uſe to keep off evil, it will make us add that which is beſt of all, to ſecure by well-doing an Intereſt in the Favour of God. It is a great defect of Wiſdom, as well as of True Religion, to be ſo nice as we often are, in weighing the means of our welfare, with the cauſes of danger; and this with reſpect only to ſecond cauſes; forgetting all the while, that which ought in the firſt and chiefeſt place to be remembred, the Supreme Mover and Orderer even of thoſe Cauſes, and of the whole matter. But if we laid to heart what we all believe, that it is an unſeen hand that governs all, undoubtedly we ſhould be more afraid of our ſins, than of all other miſeries; and more concerned to be ſtrong in the Favour of *God*, than in the *Arm of Fleſh*. This Conſideration is equally good to comfort us under Adverſity, if that happens, becauſe God ſends it; for tho there may be good reaſon

reason to take evil in evil part, from men who seldom mean well to us, when they trouble and grieve us; yet there is this to make us patient, that it is of God's sending too, who means us no harm, and will convert it to good, which is the true reason of that excellent saying of *Job*, ch. 2. v. 10. *Shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* For the Emphasis lies in these Words, *From the hand of God.* For we rank him in effect with men, if we cannot be pleased with him, but when he gives us what we desire: When good comes to us, it is welcome from what hand soever it comes; but this is one part of the singular Worship we pay to God, that from him we can receive evil too, without suspecting either the Goodness of his Intention, or the Wisdom of his Counsel.

These are the Two Points which lye at the bottom of this Discourse of our Saviour, viz. That Punishment belongs to Sin; and, That the Evils which happen in this World, do not happen without the Providence of God attending upon all the Circumstances thereof.

I proceed now to those Points which are the direct purpose of this place; whereof the

I. Is,

1. Is, That they who ſuffer very great Evils, are not always greater Sinners than thoſe who in the mean time ſuffer nothing: That is the plain Doctrine of our Saviour, expreſſed in theſe Queſtions, *Suppoſe ye that theſe were greater ſinners, than all the Galileans? and theſe, than all that dwell at Jeruſalem?* They indeed that heard him, being *Jews*, were ready enough ſo to ſuppoſe; but this was that Error of theirs, which he in the firſt place deſigned to correct; and it was neceſſary for them to be ſet right in this matter by ſome great Authority, becauſe it was an Error ſo eaſie for them to ſlide into, by reaſon of the Temper and Conſtitution of their Law, which to them that kept it, promiſed all the good things of this Life, and threatned all the evils of Life to them that broke it: But the time was now coming, when theſe Conſiderations ſhould not be ſo much regarded, and God would eſtabliſh a Covenant upon promiſes of an higher nature than thoſe of the Law of *Moſes*, and upon more terrible penalties than were threatned by that Law: And therefore this plain Doctrine of our Saviour, which no doubt was ſomething ſurprizing to his Hearers, was very ſeaſonable to be delivered,

livered, just when that Law was expiring, and a better was to take place: The time was coming when *all that would live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer Persecution*; when his Disciples should be *hated of all men for his names sake*, and *deliver'd up to be beaten* and *scourged*, and *put to death*; Which when they should see, they would have reason to remember that he had told them, upon a particular occasion, that they were not to call them the greatest Sinners, who suffered such things, as so many together never endured before; but there was a notorious Provocation of Divine Justice to deserve it. Now there were greater designs in hand, than to keep a small Nation, in comparison, to the observation of a Law, that required abundance of Ceremony, and was content with the outward work, which served to an happy Life in this World. The true rules of Righteousness and Charity were now to be laid down, and men were to learn to live above the World, and to be brought to the Practice of Piety, by the promises of Immortality in a future State; to reward them for any thing they should lose or suffer for it, in this: It would therefore be expedient, that the power of this Faith should be

be sometimes demonstrated, to the Glory of God, and the Instruction of Man, and that by examples of constancy in suffering for Righteousness; it would also be expedient, that the Profession of so holy a Faith should not be dishonoured by the continual scandals of men, whose Conversation is quite contrary to their Profession; and therefore that God should purify his Church in the Furnace of Affliction, and sometimes separate the Sincere from the Hypocrite, by bringing them to the Test of Persecution, that those who hang loosely upon the Christian Communion, might be shaken off, and none but good examples left in it, to bring greater Credit to the Gospel, and more Proselytes to it, than it had before. Since therefore the Time was coming, when men should suffer not at all, as Sinners or Evil doers, but for a good Cause, and with a good Conscience, most certainly it was a seasonable Instruction, that the greatest Sufferers were not to be accounted the greatest Sinners.

But this, I confess, is a Reason that doth not reach the full intention of our Saviour, in the Doctrine he laid down upon this occasion mentioned in the

Text; for his true Disciples in suffering for their Faith and Profession, cannot be said to suffer for their Sins; but his words considered with all the circumstances wherewith they are to be taken, do suppose that when men suffer for their sins, they are not to be accounted greater sinners merely for that reason, than those who at the same time escape, and suffer nothing; for when he said, that neither should they escape that heard him, unless they repented; it was implied, or at least not denied, that those things happened to the aforesaid *Galileans* and *Jews* as a Punishment of their Sins; and a plain case it is, that in this Life where *the Tares and the Wheat grow together*, that by the same Afflictions, God punishes the Sins of some, while he manifests the Sincerity of others; and in this case it remains true, that those who are punished, are not to be accounted greater sinners than all those that escape; of which we need not desire any other proof than our Saviour's word for it: But in some cases we have very evident and sensible demonstration of it: For sometimes God punishes the sins of some men by the hands of others that are worse than they, whom he reserves for far greater Punishments in

Life, as the Histories of the Church do abundantly testifie: Now by the same reason, that it must not be concluded of those that suffer under the oppressions of others, that they are worse than those that oppress them, it ought not neither to be concluded of those that do not suffer by them, that they are better than those that do; for the former observation is an evident proof that they do not suffer first, who deserve it most. Which is a Doctrine that our Saviour thought fit to deliver in his days, and will be of constant use, while the World lasts, to keep Christians at the greatest distance from that Jewish Error, That men may discern God's Love and Hatred by what befalls them in this World. I will therefore never suffer my self to be run into an ill opinion of any man, or any people, by any adversity, how great soever it be, which happens to them before my eyes; much less will I enter into comparisons; I will not conclude from the Affliction I see, that there must needs be some great sin at the bottom, which Vengeance has found out: And when I see the sin, and cannot forbear acknowledging the justice of God, I will not go on to suppose, there is something more

than I do ſee, and make him to be a worſe man than he ſeems to be; nor will I conclude, that he is worſe than thoſe, that do not ſuffer ſuch things: And what conſtruction I will forbear to make of a ſingle Perſon, I will much more forbear to make of Multitudes: Becauſe I know the reaſons of God's Proceedings with Peoples and Nations, and great bodies of men, are by me unſearcheable, and that time diſcovers that Wiſdom of his Counſels, which my reaſon cannot fathom; In a word, I will conclude ill of none, becauſe they ſuffer, but rather well of them, if I know no cauſe to the contrary, becauſe it is often God's method to afflict his own beſt Servants, and when he Puniſhes for Sin, to begin with thoſe that do not moſt of all deſerve it. Shall I conclude, for inſtance, that the *French* Proteſtants have been the greateſt Sinners of all the Proteſtants in *Europe*, or greater than our ſelves, becauſe they have ſuffered ſuch things? God forbid! I ſpeak not of thoſe, who to their Glory in this World, but alas, that is little worth, it becomes me to ſay, and you to hear it, who to their Praiſe with God, and to the encreaſe of their reward hereafter in a better Life, have ſuffered the loſs of all things,

things, to keep a good Conſcience: but of thoſe whom the Terrors of this World have prevailed with, more than the *Terrors of the Lord*; in whom the deſire of eaſe here, hath been too hard for the deſire of Salvation hereafter; I will not ſay, and we muſt not ſay, that even theſe were greater Sinners than our ſelves, who have not fallen into their Temptations. Such inſtances as theſe, Brethren, do beſt explain the intention of our Saviour in theſe words, and will affect us with the true ſenſe of them; and the more that we look abroad into the World, and conſider the unſearchableneſs of God's Judgments, and that *his ways are paſt finding out*, as we cannot but do, if we ask our ſelves the reaſon why this and that happens; the more ſenſibly we ſhall acknowledg the Truth of our Saviour's Doctrine in this place, and ſhall forbear paſſing Judgment upon the unhappy, merely becauſe they are ſo. But yet to take notice of what God doth of this kind in the World, is not an unprofitable obſervation, and that becauſe the ſecond point of the three, which I have mentioned, is as true as the firſt, and that is this.

2. That one reaſon, why the Evils of this Life do not befall all Perſons at the

ſame time, who are equally Sinners, is, That while ſome are viſited with the Rod of God, others may take warning by it: This Propoſition I lay down with great confidence, not only of the Truth of it in general, but alſo of the pertinence of it to the Text: For you may obſerve, that our Saviour upon mention made of the former of the Two Tragical Stories, obſerves the latter himſelf, and takes occaſion from thence to divert his hearers from cenſuring thoſe miſerable Perſons, as they were ready to do, and to imploy them in reflecting upon themſelves: *I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh:* he imployed them in reflecting upon their own ſins; for ſays he, *except ye repent*; and upon their own danger, *except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* And now I am ſure it will be granted, that our Saviour did not wander from the true intent of God's Providence in the things that happened to thoſe perſons, nor make an application of them, which was not to the purpoſe; and therefore ſince he gave warning by their examples, it remains true, as I ſaid, that one reaſon why the Evils of this Life do not befall all Perſons at the ſame time who equally deſerve them, and I will add,

add, who equally need them, is this; That while ſome are corrected, others may be inſtructed: I rather keep to the caſe of Puniſhing Sin, than trying Virtue, becauſe that is the caſe of the Text; though I might ſay too, That the reaſon why all that can bear a tryal, are not tryed at the ſame time is, becauſe the tryals of ſome righteous men are not only profitable to themſelves, but the examples of them alſo are profitable to other good men to encourage and fortifie them. But when God puniſhes, he doth not at one and the ſame Time, puniſh all that deſerve it equally, but he puniſhes ſome, that the reſt may take warning; For if the ſufferings of a Few in compariſon, would inſtruct all the reſt, God's end is gained, which is, that we ſhould *learn righteouſneſs, when his judgments are abroad in the Earth*: And this is one of thoſe arguments which may convince us, that *God doth not willingly afflict and grieve the Children of Men*; for if he took pleaſure in that, then without queſtion where there was the ſame cauſe, there would be the ſame effect of his diſpleaſure; and where the ſame need appeared, the ſame remedy would be uſed; but if where all might juſtly be puniſhed, he uſes his Pre-

rogative to punish some only, and for the time spares the rest, to prove and try them whether the examples of his Justice upon others will bring them to Repentance; in this case it plainly appears, that he delights not in that which is grievous to us, but would bring us to Repentance at the same time, by shewing his Justice upon some, and his Patience towards others. We can indeed give no account why God begins to afflict this man, and not that; this People, and not another; but the general point is very obvious (*i. e.*) why all are not made to suffer together, where there is the same Provocation of Divine Justice, and the same need of being awakened to Repentance; for the reason of it, is this, That the Punishment of some is a sufficient warning to others; and God does not afflict all at once, because he doth not willingly afflict the Children of Men: For mark our Saviour's arguing in this place: There were among the *Galileans* as great Sinners, as those whose Blood *Pilate* mingled with their Sacrifices; There were among the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, as great Sinners, as those were upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell; and yet those calamities happened but to a few;

few; The uſe that he would have the reſt make of thoſe Examples, was this, That they ſhould repent; which he urged by this threatning, *except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*: Now he that threatens to puniſh and has power to do it, doth plainly ſhow, that he takes no delight in Puniſhing, but would prevent the fault that deſerves it; eſpecially, when he threatens and ſhews Examples of Juſtice at the ſame time, and might have made thoſe Examples of his Juſtice too, whom he threatens. And ſo I proceed to the third Propoſition, which is,

3. That if thoſe who eſcape from the Puniſhment, do not take warning by thoſe that ſuffer, themſelves ſhall not always Eſcape; and this is the direct purport of the Words, *I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*; and that by *Periſhing* here, our Lord meant the Puniſhments of this Life, is plain from hence, that he threatned ſuch like deſtruction, as happened to thoſe few *Galileans*, and thoſe few upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell. Ye ſhall all *likewiſe* Periſh, (*i.e.*) much after the ſame manner, as indeed it happened, and that to admiration; For as the Blood of thoſe *Galileans* was mingled with their Sacrifices;

fices; ſo was the Blood of the *Jews* mingled with the Blood of thoſe Paſchal Sacrifices, which they came to offer juſt before the *Roman* Army hemm'd them in; and as thoſe eighteen were killed by the fall of the Tower of *Siloam*, ſo were the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* deſtroyed in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* it ſelf. Although the Covenant of the Goſpel was eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes, and with more frightful Penalties, than thoſe of this World; yet the Providence of God doth not neglect the bringing men to Repentance by the Good and Evil of this Life; nay it is neceſſary to the maintaining a ſenſe of God, and a World to come, even amongſt Chriſtians, That his diſpleaſure ſhould be ſeen, where his goodneſs doth not *lead to repentance*; and it is his goodneſs, that by his Judgments he doth awaken us, when nothing elſe is able to do it. And therefore although the great motives of Chriſtianity are thoſe that concern another Life; yet when theſe do not prevail, the only remedy that is left, is to inſtruct us by preſent corrections, and to touch us in thoſe things, of which we are moſt ſenſible, *viz.* The preſent concerns of this World. If therefore, after he hath made ſome examples

amples to others, theſe do not Repent, it is ſtill more neceſſary that they ſhould not eſcape, becauſe they have abuſed the long ſuffering of God towards themſelves, and taken no warning by thoſe, whom God Chaſtened, while he ſpared them: For if their obſtinacy ſhould go without Puniſhment, the example of their Impunity would do more hurt to ſucceeding Generations, than if there had been no warnings given at all; and for this reaſon, the ſufferings of thoſe Sinners that were made the firſt examples, are commonly leſs than theirs, that would learn no inſtruction by them, as it hapned to the *Jews* 40 years after this warning that our Saviour gave them, upon ſo inſtructing an occaſion.

The uſe we are to make of theſe conſiderations, is, To do the ſame thing, which we ſhould certainly do, if God's Judgments were upon us, as they are upon others, that we alſo periſh not: For if we would *judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged*; and if the warning that God gives us by others, hath the ſame effect, that Correction it ſelf would have upon us, God, who doth not willingly grieve the Children of Men, would ſpare us, and not *enter into Judgment* with us. It is but conſidering how we ſhould be diſpoſed

poſed by great affliction and bringing our minds to that temper without it, and then the great deſign of Divine Corrections and Puniſhments is attained without Puniſhment. And how are men wrought upon by Calamities? excepting ſome few, who are ſuch wretches as *Ahab* was, *who in his diſtreſs ſinned yet more and more.* Theſe are the common effects: In general, they begin then to call their ſins to mind, and their Conſciences bring forth the guilt, that hath been for the moſt part quiet, and do ſet their evil ways in order before them: Nay, then they are very willing to acknowledge, that what they ſuffer, is no more than what they deſerve, but a great deal leſs: Thus as I inſinuated at firſt, *Joſeph's* Brethren, when they felt the anguiſh of mind, that their preſent diſtreſs caſt them into, could then ſay, *Verily we were guilty concerning our Brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, and would not hear him.* It is not to be thought but that after ſo Treacherous and Villanous a part, as the ſelling of *Joſeph* was, their Conſciences had pulled every one of them for it at certain times; but it is likely they made a ſhift to forget it, as much as they could from time to time, till they fell

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into that perplexity, which their Brother caſt them in; and then they talkt to one another about their Sin freely and ſorrowfully, as if they had all long diſſembled their ſenſe of it to one another before; *Verily we were guilty concerning our Brother.* This is one end of God's Chaſtiſements, to bring thoſe to an effectual acknowledgment of their evil ways, who till then had ſmothered the Conviction of their Guilt; and that is one end too of God's warnings. When ſome are made examples of his juſtice, and he ſpares others to prove them, whether they will be warned by ſuch examples. Again, when we feel anguiſh our ſelves, we remember how we have for a long time abuſed the Patience of God, and *turned his Grace into Wantonneſs*; then our Luxury and Intemperance, whileſt we had plenty of all things for this Life, and our neglect of Inſtruction and Admonition under all means of Grace for a better Life; then I ſay theſe things come to mind: And if God ſpares us, whileſt he ſmites others, it is that we may not need any thing more, than ſuch a warning, to make us reflect upon theſe things as we ought to do. Thus alſo God's Corrections diſpoſe men to Charity and Conſideration

ration of one another; they cure us of that ſtifneſs and wantonneſs, which, whilſt all things go well with us, carries on Contention and Hatred: And therefore that we may not make it neceſſary for Providence to teach us Wiſdom and Charity by withdrawing thoſe bounties of his, which we abuſe to the pampering of Pride and Obſtinacy, we ſhould learn to be Wiſe by Examples, before we are made Examples our ſelves.

To conclude this matter, Who can be Ignorant that Affliction drives thoſe men to Prayer, and other Duties of Piety, who were very careleſs of them before? *In their diſtreſs they will ſeek God early*, though in their Proſperity they were ſo backward to any thing of Religion, and for the moſt part felt very faint and ineffectual diſpoſitions to it, rather complying with cuſtom, than with Inclination and Conſcience; and Honouring God *with their lips, while their hearts are far from him*: and this is the great danger of a Proſperous State, To be full and to forget God. But if nothing elſe will cure this Sloathfulneſs in Religion, and this indifference and coldneſs in the Service of God, yet at leaſt Affliction doth it, which makes us to feel our Dependance upon God, and

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ſhows us, that we have no hope left but in him, and then we abound in Prayers, and we attend willingly to inſtruction; we apply our ſelves to God in good earneſt, and to all the Comforts of Religion; we make many Vows and Promiſes, and we ſet our ſelves immediately to perform them: This is the Natural effect of ſufferings, when we feel them our ſelves; and if we are wiſe, it ſhould be the effect of all thoſe warnings that God hath given us by the ſufferings of others: Since therefore we cannot look abroad into the World, but we ſhall ſee the *Judgments of God in the Earth*, let us *learn Righteouſneſs*, let us *not be high-minded but fear*; let us not judge others, but judge our ſelves, and often conſider, what our Saviour replied to the ſuppoſition of their being Sinners above all others, who ſuffered ſuch things, as others had not ſuffered; *I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

The Thirteenth Sermon.

Luke XVIII. 8.

Nevertheleſs, when the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the Earth?

FOR the underſtanding of theſe words of our Saviour, two things are to be conſidered.

1. What is here meant by the *Coming of the Son of Man.* And,

2. What is meant by his *not finding Faith upon the Earth.*

1. How we are to underſtand thoſe words, *when the Son of Man cometh?* I anſwer, The meaning is, when he cometh to Execute Judgment upon the ungodly, and to deliver his Faithful People out of their Hands: For after our Saviour

had ſpoken the Parable of the Unjuſt Judge, that was wearied by the Widows importunity to do juſtice for her againſt her adverſaries, he argued thus *v.* 7. *And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them?* or rather, as it might have been tranſlated, *and will he bear long in their cauſe? I tell you, that he will avenge them ſpeedily*; And then follow theſe words, *Nevertheleſs, when the Son of Man cometh* (*i. e.*) when he cometh to do that which was ſpoken of before, *viz.* to *avenge the cauſe of his elect*, or to Puniſh their Enemies and Oppreſſors, and to deliver them out of their hands.

Now of the *Coming of Chriſt* for this purpoſe, there is alſo a Twofold Signification in the New Teſtament, whereof one is manifeſtly the Principal, and much more conſiderable than the other, and that is, his ſecond coming in Perſon to Judge the Quick and the Dead, which will not be till the end of the World: Thus the Coming of the *Day of the Lord*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 10. is called *his coming*, *v.* 4 and *the Coming of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, with all his Saints*, 1 *Theſ.* 3. 13. and in many other places. And this is all the *coming of Chriſt* properly ſo called, that the New

Teſtament

Teſtament mentions after his Firſt, becauſe this only is to be his Second Perſonal Appearance. But then,

2. There was another notion of the *Coming of Chriſt* after his firſt, which is alſo plainly enough intimated in the New Teſtament, and that was his Coming to deſtroy the Jews, and to deliver the Chriſtians out of their hands, which happened 40. Years after his death: And of this the 24*th.* Chapter of St. *Matthew* is an undeniable Teſtimony, where a Deſcription of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and a Deſcription of the Day of Judgment are ſo interwoven one with the other, that it is a matter of ſome difficulty to know punctually and fully, what is proper to the one, and what to the other: But plain it is, that the one as well as the other is called *the Coming of the Son of Man*, as appears by Verſes 27, and 37. The Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* was made as it were a Type or Figure of the Day of Judgment; and therefore theſe words are there, *Verily I ſay unto You, this Generation ſhall not paſs away, till all theſe things be fulfilled*, *v.* 34. (*i. e.*) till they are accompliſhed in that part of the meaning which reſpects the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, which was deſtroyed before

that Generation paſſed away. Of this it ſeems plain that St. *James* ſpeaks, *C.* 5. *v.* 6, 7. where ſpeaking to the Jews, ſays he, *Ye have condemned and killed the Juſt*; and to the Chriſtians, *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord*; and v. 8. *Be ye alſo Patient, ſtabliſh your hearts, for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh*; and ſome other places there are, where the Phraſe is to be Interpreted thus; Particularly that, *Let your moderation be known unto all men, The Lord is at hand, Phil.* 4. 5. (*i. e.*) let all men ſee by your Meekneſs and Patience under thoſe Oppreſſions, which you ſuffer, that you believe thoſe Predictions, which we have delivered to you from Chriſt, that he is at hand to deliver you; And although properly the end of all things will not be till the laſt day, when the *Earth ſhall be burnt up*, and all the works that are therein; yet becauſe this notable revolution of the deſtruction of the Jews was in ſome degree like unto it, therefore it was alſo called *the end of all things*, meaning the end of the Jewiſh State and Religion, which was to be accompanied with manifeſt Tokens of God's Favour to the Chriſtians, and of his indignation at their Enemies. And thus

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we are to underſtand that paſſage in St. *Peter*, *The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore ſober and watch unto Prayer*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. Not that this was in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe the *Coming of Chriſt*, becauſe he did not come in Perſon, as he will do at the laſt day; but in ſome ſenſe it might be ſo called, becauſe he Appeared by his Power and Providence to do the ſame work in part, which will with incomparably greater perfection be done at the laſt, (*i. e.*) to take Vengeance of the ungodly, and to ſave his own People: For the Incorrigibleneſs of the Jewiſh Nation, and their incurable hatred of the Truth, and obſtinate Perſecution of it, was dreadfully puniſhed in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; and the Chriſtians had not only all eſcaped out of it, before the *Roman* Army came againſt it, but by the deſtruction of it, they gained alſo a very conſiderable reſt from Perſecution for ſome time after.

And now the reaſon why this wonderful Providence was called the *coming of Chriſt*, ſeems plainly to be this, That after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, he ſet down at the right hand of God, and had all Power put into his hands; and therefore becauſe it is he that Governs the

World as well as the Church; ſuch remarkable revolutions, as that was, for the deſtruction of his enemies, and the ſaving of his Servants, are called the *coming of Chriſt*; *God hath given him to be head over all things to the Church*, and therefore ſuch paſſages, as that was, are called his *coming*, to ſignify, that they are the effects of his Providence and government for the good of his Church, no leſs, than if he had come in Perſon to order them, as he will do at the end of the World, to order all things then.

And for this reaſon, though in the proper ſenſe of his *coming*, he will come but once at the end of the World, yet in this improper ſenſe of it, his appeaance to deſtroy his enemies, and to ſave his People, that truſt in him, nothing hinders, but that he may be ſaid to come often before the end of World, (*i. e.*) as often as his Providence doth ſignally and remarkably appear for this purpoſe: And thus we are to underſtand the coming of the Lord in 2. *Theſ.* 2. 8. where it is ſaid of the *Man of Sin*, that *Wicked one*, That the *Lord ſhall conſume him with the Spirit of his mouth, and deſtroy him with the brightneſs of his coming*; which being to be done, before the Perſonal coming

coming of Chriſt to Judgment, the meaning muſt be, that his deſtruction ſhall be ſo remarkably the work of a Divine Providence, that all ſhall confeſs it was not the effect of Worldly Policy, but no leſs the doing of the Lord, than if himſelf had come in Perſon to deſtroy him. And whenever *the Kingdoms of the World become the Kingdoms of the Lord*; when *the knowledg of God covers the earth as the waters cover the Sea*; when thoſe magnificent predictions are fulfilled concerning the univerſal prevalence of Truth and Goodneſs amongſt men, with which the Old and New Teſtament are plentifully furniſhed, and which are to be fulfilled, before the coming of Chriſt to the laſt Judgment; then alſo is it true, that the Lord comes, (*i. e.*) by the Power of his Spirit and Providence to renew and reform a degenerate World, that was running headlong into perdition.

And thus much concerning the ſenſe of theſe words, *when the Son of man cometh*, which I have ſhown do principally ſignifie that great and amazing revolution, when he ſhall come by coming in his own Perſon at the laſt day to judge the World, but in a ſecondary ſenſe do alſo ſignifie the remarkable works of his Pro-

dence, in Punishing some, and saving others even in this Life. Now,

2. How are we to understand that other clause, *will he find Faith upon the earth?* The meaning of the question is plainly this; That he will not find Faith on the earth, or very little in comparison. But what is here meant by *Faith?* I answer, that is easily discerned by the Parable and the Application of it, that went before. The design of both which, was to infer the conclusion in the foregoing verse, *And shall not God avenge his own* elect, *which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily:* That is to say, God would hear the Prayers of Righteous men, and in a little time take their cause into his own hand; and then says our Saviour, *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* (*i. e.*) notwithstanding the Promises of God to hear the Prayers of good men, and to interpose for them that depend upon him, there will be but little Faith in these Promises found upon the Earth, even when the Son of Man comes to fulfil them: The greatest part will not be found to believe any thing at all of them, and so will be surprized with that day, without any

any preparation for it, or expectation of it. Many will yield to the Temptations of this preſent World, and throwing off their dependance upon God, will think to ſecure themſelves by Flattery and Hypocriſy from the Violence of Wicked men; others will deſpair of any better ſtate of things; And very few will lay to heart the promiſes which God hath made to hear the Prayers of his Servants, and to ſave them: Few will ſtrengthen themſelves in God by crying to him day and night, and by putting their whole truſt and confidence in him; and this notwithſtanding the clear and ſtrong reaſons they have from his word, ſo to do. *Nevertheleſs, when the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* And thus we may from other places of Scripture obſerve, that immediately before the Day of judgment, there will be a great falling away from Chriſtian Piety and Charity; nay, and the World ſhould begin once more to depart from the Purity of Faith; *many falſe Prophets ſhall ariſe, and ſhall deceive many; and becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall wax cold.* But, ſays our Saviour, *he that endures to the end, ſhall be ſaved*; thereby intimating, that it would be

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